

Toll Television Isn't New Twist in Mass Entertainment; It's Revolution

By WILLIAM EWALD
United Press Correspondent
New York — Toll TV is no just a new twist in mass entertainment, it is a revolution. It means that for the first time in history, you don't have to put on more stage shows. The previous concept of box office entertainment boiled down to this: The paying audience had to be moved to a theater or arena. That audience receptacle had to be centrally located, an expensive proposition. That receptacle could be used only periodically or even seasonally, also an expensive proposition. Toll TV moves the entertainment to the paying audience. It puts a box office in the home. It is an electronic delivery service.

Right now, you see entertainment on TV free. Sponsors pay the bills. According to a New York financial house, those sponsors spent about one billion dollars in 1956 on TV. However, not much of that sum went toward the creation of actual program content. Almost 900 million dollars, says Harris, Upham and company, went toward the purchase of program time, commercials and spot time.

Largest Audience Needed
Toll TV's say despite a sprinkling of quality shows on TV, the bread and butter of commercial TV must be paid — the sponsor must reach the largest possible audience for the smallest cost. Furthermore, say toll TV's, TV cost are rocketing. The average half-hour situation comedy costs \$35,000 to \$40,000. Last season, the production budget for the Perry Como hour was \$108,000, for Jackie Gleason about \$102,000, for Sid Caesar about \$115,000. How many sponsors can afford to carry this kind of a load? Not many, say toll TV's. In 1956, for example, 25 per cent of TV's bill was paid for by 10 top firms.

What's more, say toll TV advocates, commercial TV has affected other entertainment industries—minor league baseball, fight clubs, the movies. Back in 1947, for example, movie theaters grossed more than \$1,500,000,000; last year, the gross was \$1,200,000,000. Among the eight major movie studios, RKO is closed, Republic operates for the most part as a rental depot for TV films, and the six other companies all have been forced to swing heavily to TV film production.

Is This The Answer
Toll TV's say they have the answer. A picture like "Giant," which needs about 10 million dollars to break even, could make back its investment in a single night if only half the TV homes (20,000,000) were willing to pay 50 cents a head. It could still be shown in theaters here and abroad and on TV again.

Would people be willing to pay? Well, the Alfred Pollitz research firm reports that 16 million people over 15 years of age would be willing to pay 50 cents for a first run feature or a Broadway play on TV. Pollitz says six million people would pay \$1 to see an opera; almost 20 million fans would pay \$1 for a World Series game; 16 million buffs would pay \$1 to watch a championship fight via toll TV. If all this is so, it would mean an upheaval in the entertainment field. The Hollywood dream factories would have to labor overtime to feed the toll TV demand. Fight promoters and baseball magnates would harvest fortunes. The Brooklyn - Los Angeles Dodgers already have been guaranteed a minimum of two million dollars from a toll TV operator; their present TV take is \$750,000 annually. College Courses Possible College might teach courses via toll TV and reap bushels of money; charities could stage telethons on pay TV to collect their yearly budgets. However, there are some flaws in this picture. One is the public's appetite for enter-

tainment — no family is going to sit down night after night and plunk down \$1 for a movie. Another is the reluctance of producers and authors to release their hits to toll TV under the present tax structure. Oscar Hammerstein recently pointed out that it wouldn't be worth it to him to coin a million dollars in a single night from a showing of "South Pacific." It's more advantageous to spread his earnings over a period of years. Another problem centers around actors, stagehands, technicians. What happens to a supporting actor who figures to make \$400 a week for a year in a hit Broadway play? How do you go about paying him? How do you compensate for the loss of what might be a year's work? The American Federation of Television and Radio Actors sees toll TV as a threat. On the other hand, Ralph Bellamy, long active in actor's equity, sees it as a boon to both actors and the theater.

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Bids Opening Planned For Forest Road Work

Bids will open Sept. 4 at 10 a.m. in the Bureau of Public Roads office in Portland for the construction of 6,698 miles of the Steve Fork road in the Rogue River national forest in Jackson and Josephine counties. The forest development road, numbered 408-A, will take off from the Thompson Creek road, near Applegate, about 30 miles southeast of Grants Pass. The road is designed to provide access to stands of timber in the area. The construction job will be primarily a grading job but a small concrete bridge is included. Estimated quantities included 49 acres clearing and grub-

Legislation Passed to Make Enterprise Shrine

Washington—The Senate has passed and sent to the House legislation authorizing the carrier Enterprise to be berthed here as a memorial shrine. The famed "Big E" of World War II Pacific glory is destined for scrapping unless the Enterprise association, headed by Fleet Admiral William F. Halsey, can raise the funds to save her. The association is planning a 205,000 cubic yards excavation, 85 cubic yards concrete, 20,000 pounds reinforcing steel, 28,000 linear feet culvert pipe and other small items. Specifications and plans are available at BPR offices, 753 Morgan building, Portland.

The Insurance Company of North America, chartered in 1794, was the first general insurance company to sell life insurance in America. In five years only six policies were issued and the company discontinued business in 1804.

One of the most interesting military restorations is Old Ft. Niagara at Youngstown, N. Y., overlooking Lake Ontario. First built by the French as Ft. Conti, it was later rebuilt by both the British and American forces. In 1927 it was extensively restored.

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